Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1.   (Currently Amended)   In a web-based business information system having an internal e-mail facility, a method for facilitating and tracking e-mail communications between (i) an end user of the web-based business information system and (ii) an external contact that is not an end user of the web-based business information system, comprising:

sending an initial e-mail message from said internal e-mail facility to the external contact, wherein a domain of a REPLY-TO field of said initial e-mail message corresponds to a domain of said internal e-mail facility, and wherein a local part of said REPLY-TO field of said initial e-mail message comprises a tracking string encoding tracking information associated with said end user and said external contact with respect to said web-based business information system, the tracking string having a plurality of distinct components including a first ~~tracking string~~ component uniquely identifying a thread of conversation between said end user and said external contact and a second ~~tracking string~~ component that orders messages in the thread of conversation independent of message date;

receiving at said internal e-mail facility a first reply e-mail message from said external contact replying to said initial e-mail message, said first reply e-mail message having a TO field including said tracking string; and

sending from said internal e-mail facility a modified version of said first reply e-mail message to a native e-mail address of the end user, said native e-mail address corresponding to a native e-mail system of the end user different than said internal e-mail facility and lying outside said web-based business information system, wherein a domain of a REPLY-TO field of said modified version of said first reply e-mail message corresponds to

said domain of said internal e-mail facility, and wherein a local part of said REPLY-TO field comprises a first modified version of said tracking string.

   2. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

   generating a first metadata object based on said tracking string of said first reply e-mail message, wherein said first metadata object associates said first reply e-mail message with said end user, said external contact, and at least one business functionality therebetween to be tracked by web-based business information system; and

   archiving said first reply e-mail message according to at least one characteristic of said first metadata object.

   3. (Original) The method of claim 2, further comprising generating a viewable communication log screen including information derived from said first metadata object.

   4. (Original) The method of claim 2, further comprising:

   receiving a second reply e-mail message from said end user replying to said modified version of said first reply e-mail message, said second reply e-mail message having a TO field including said first modified version of said tracking string; and

   sending a modified version of said second reply e-mail message to the external contact, wherein a domain of a REPLY-TO field of said modified version of said second reply e-mail message corresponds to said domain of said internal e-mail facility, and wherein a local part of said REPLY-TO field comprises a second modified version of said tracking string.

   5. (Original) The method of claim 4, further comprising:

   generating a second metadata object based on said second modified version of said tracking string of said second reply e-mail message, wherein said second metadata

object associates said second reply e-mail message with said end user, said external contact, and said at least one business functionality; and

     archiving said second reply e-mail message according to at least one characteristic of said second metadata object.

     6. (Original) The method of claim 5, further comprising generating a viewable communication log screen including information derived from said first metadata object and said second metadata object.

     7. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein said native e-mail system of said end user is web-hosted e-mail service.

     8. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein said native e-mail system of said end user is a dedicated desktop e-mail application.

     9. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein said internal e-mail facility is operated out of a same Internet domain as said web-based business information system.

     10. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein said initial e-mail message comprises a message body manually composed by the end user.

     11. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein said initial e-mail message is automatically sent on behalf of the end user by said web-based business information system.

     12. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein said REPLY-TO field of said initial e-mail message further comprises a display name for said end user that is substantially identical to a display name associated with said end user in said native e-mail system of the end user.

13.　　(Original)　　The method of claim 4, wherein said web-based business information system is provided by an application service provider and subscribed to by a business enterprise with which said end user is affiliated.

14.　　(Original)　　The method of claim 4, wherein said web-based business information system is self-hosted by a business enterprise with which said end user is affiliated.

15–19.　　(Canceled)

20.　　(Currently Amended)　　In a web-based business information system having an internal e-mail facility, a method for facilitating and tracking e-mail communications between (i) an end user of the web-based business information system and (ii) an external contact that is not an end user of the web-based business information system, comprising:

sending an initial e-mail message from said internal e-mail facility to the external contact, wherein a first thread-recurrent field of said initial e-mail message comprises a tracking string encoding tracking information associated with said end user and said external contact with respect to said web-based business information system, the encoded tracking information having a plurality of distinct components including a first ~~tracking information~~ component uniquely identifying a thread of conversation between said end user and said external contact and a second ~~tracking information~~ component that orders messages in the thread of conversation independent of message date;

receiving at said internal e-mail facility a first reply e-mail message from said external contact replying to said initial e-mail message, said first reply e-mail message comprising said tracking string in said first thread-recurrent field thereof; and

sending from said internal e-mail facility a modified version of said first reply e-mail message to a native e-mail address of the end user, said native e-mail address corresponding to a native e-mail system of the end user different than said internal e-mail

facility and lying outside said web-based business information system, wherein a second thread-recurrent field of said modified version of said first reply e-mail message comprises a first modified version of said tracking string in which the second ~~tracking information~~ component is modified and the first ~~tracking information~~ component is unmodified.

21.   (Original)   The method of claim 20, further comprising:

generating a first metadata object based on said tracking string of said first reply e-mail message, wherein said first metadata object associates said first reply e-mail message with said end user, said external contact, and at least one business functionality therebetween to be tracked by web-based business information system; and

archiving said first reply e-mail message according to at least one characteristic of said first metadata object.

22.   (Currently Amended)   The method of claim 21, further comprising:

receiving a second reply e-mail message from said end user replying to said modified version of said first reply e-mail message, said second reply e-mail message having said first modified version of said tracking string in said second thread-recurrent field thereof; and

sending a modified version of said second reply e-mail message to the external contact, wherein a third thread-recurrent field of said modified version of said second reply e-mail message comprises a second modified version of said tracking string in which the second ~~tracking information~~ component is further modified and the first ~~tracking information~~ component remains unmodified.

23.   (Original)   The method of claim 22, wherein said reply-designating header fields of said initial e-mail message, said modified version of said first reply e-mail message, and said modified version of said second reply e-mail message are each REPLY-TO fields.

24.   (Canceled)

25.   (Original)   The method of claim 22, wherein said first, second, and third thread-recurrent fields are each SUBJECT fields.

26.   (Original)   The method of claim 22, wherein said first, second, and third thread-recurrent fields are encrypted into body fields of said initial e-mail message, said modified version of said first reply e-mail message, and said modified version of said second reply e-mail message, respectively.

27.   (Currently Amended)   A computer-implemented method for facilitating communications between at least a first e-mail user and a second e-mail user, comprising:

sending a first e-mail message from the first e-mail user to the second e-mail user, the first e-mail message having a first thread-recurrent field encoding tracking information comprising a plurality of distinct tracking information components including a first tracking information component identifying a distinguished communications category of a plurality of communications categories and a second tracking information component uniquely identifying a distinguished thread of communications between at least the first e-mail user and the second e-mail user;

receiving, responsive to the first e-mail message, a second e-mail message sent from the second e-mail user to the first e-mail user, the second e-mail message having a second thread-recurrent field encoding tracking information comprising the first tracking information component identifying the distinguished communications category and the second tracking information component uniquely identifying the distinguished thread of communications between at least the first e-mail user and the second e-mail user; and

responsive to the second e-mail message, evaluating one or more rules to access rules-based e-mail tracking functionality, the evaluation of the one or more rules based at least in part on the distinguished communications category identified by the first

tracking information component of the second e-mail message and the distinguished thread
of communications identified by the second tracking information component of the second e-
mail message.

28.   (Currently Amended)   A computer-implemented method
according to claim 27, wherein the distinguished communications category is general
correspondence, and the rules-based e-mail tracking functionality comprises sending a
modified version of the second e-mail message from the second e-mail user to the first e-mail
user, the modified version of the second e-mail message incorporating a modified version of
the tracking information comprising the first tracking information component identifying the
distinguished communications category and the second tracking information component
uniquely identifying the distinguished thread of communications between at least the first e-
mail user and the second e-mail user.

29.   (Previously Presented)   A computer-implemented method
according to claim 27, wherein the distinguished communications category identified by the
first tracking information component of the second e-mail message is trouble tickets, and the
rules-based e-mail tracking functionality comprises helpdesk functionality.

30.   (Previously Presented)   A computer-implemented method
according to claim 27, wherein the distinguished communications category identified by the
first tracking information component of the second e-mail message is invitation replies, and
the rules-based e-mail tracking functionality comprises business event organizing
functionality.

31.   (Previously Presented)   A computer-implemented method
according to claim 30, wherein the business event organizing functionality comprises setting
calendar appointments corresponding to positive invitation replies, and altering resource

allocations for a business event based at least in part on a number of positive invitation replies.

32.   (New)   A computer-implemented method for facilitating communications between at least a first e-mail user and a second e-mail user, comprising:

sending a first e-mail message from the first e-mail user to the second e-mail user, the first e-mail message having at least a first thread-recurrent field associated with an identification of a distinguished thread of communications between at least the first e-mail user and the second e-mail user and a cryptographic hash code based at least in part on the identification of the distinguished thread of communications between at least the first e-mail user and the second e-mail user;

receiving, responsive to the first e-mail message, a second e-mail message sent from the second e-mail user to the first e-mail user, the second e-mail message having at least a second thread-recurrent field associated with the identification of the distinguished thread of communications between at least the first e-mail user and the second e-mail user and the cryptographic hash code based at least in part on the identification of the distinguished thread of communications between at least the first e-mail user and the second e-mail user; and

responsive to the second e-mail message, evaluating one or more rules to access rules-based e-mail tracking functionality, the evaluation of the one or more rules based at least in part on the identification of the distinguished thread of communications between at least the first e-mail user and the second e-mail user and the cryptographic hash code based at least in part on the identification of the distinguished thread of communications between at least the first e-mail user and the second e-mail user.

33.   (New)   A computer-implemented method according to claim 32, wherein the rules-based e-mail tracking functionality comprises sending a modified version of the second e-mail message to the first e-mail user, the modified version of the second e-

mail message associated with the identification of the distinguished thread of communications between at least the first e-mail user and the second e-mail user and the cryptographic hash code based at least in part on the identification of the distinguished thread of communications between at least the first e-mail user and the second e-mail user.

34.   (New)   A computer-implemented method according to claim 32, wherein the identification of the distinguished thread of communications between at least the first e-mail user and the second e-mail user and the cryptographic hash code based at least in part on the identification of the distinguished thread of communications between at least the first e-mail user and the second e-mail user are transparent to at least the second e-mail user.

35.   (New)   A computer-implemented method according to claim 32, wherein the first thread-recurrent field and the second thread-recurrent field are further associated with an identification of a distinguished communications category of a plurality of communications categories, and the cryptographic hash code is further based at least in part on the identification of the distinguished communications category.

36.   (New)   A computer-implemented method according to claim 35, wherein the plurality of communications categories correspond to tracking functionality categories.

37.   (New)   A computer-implemented method according to claim 35, wherein:

the first thread-recurrent field comprises a first string that includes, as distinct sub-strings, at least (i) the identification of the distinguished communications category and (ii) the identification of the distinguished thread of communications between at least the first e-mail user and the second e-mail user; and

the second thread-recurrent field comprises a second string that includes, as distinct sub-strings, at least (i) the identification of the distinguished communications

category and (ii) the identification of the distinguished thread of communications between at least the first e-mail user and the second e-mail user.